

Office of State Parks
Agency Number 06-264

Fiscal Year 2008-2009 through 2012-2013

Agency/Program Mission Statement

The Office of State Parks serves the citizens of Louisiana and visitors by preserving and interpreting natural areas of unique or exceptional scenic value, planning, developing and operating sites that provide outdoor recreation opportunities in natural surroundings, preserving and interpreting historical and scientific sites of statewide importance and administering intergovernmental programs related to outdoor recreation and trails.

Agency/Program Goal

The Office of State Parks will increase and improve opportunities for all Louisiana citizens and visitors to enjoy and appreciate Louisiana's natural, cultural and recreational resources by planning, constructing and operating a system of parks, historic sites and preservation areas in accordance with the highest standards of management, interpretation and conservation.

Program Objectives

- Objective 1.** To increase the number of visitors served by the park system to at least 2,500,000 by the end of fiscal year 2012-2013.
- Objective 2.** To reach 220,000 individuals through program participation in interpretive programs and events offered annually by the park system by the end of fiscal year 2012-2013.
- Objective 3.** To complete 40 operational units considered new or expanded facilities in accordance with the State Parks Master Plan by the end of fiscal year 2012-2013.
- Objective 4.** To obligate 90% of federal funds allocated to Louisiana through the Land and Water Conservation Fund program through grant applications for the development of outdoor recreational facilities by the end of fiscal year 2012- 2013.

Objective 1.	To increase the number of visitors served by the park system to at least 2,500,000 by the end of fiscal year 2012-2013.
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Strategies

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| 1.1 | Maintain and operate all state park sites and facilities according to the highest standards of quality. |
| 1.2 | Provide all personnel with appropriate training, equipment and uniforms. |
| 1.3 | Revise and improve all agency policies and procedures. |
| 1.4 | Implement and upgrade all aspects of the Centralized Reservation System as feasible. |
| 1.5 | Develop and administer an orientation program for all new employees. |
| 1.6 | Administer ongoing customer service training for all employees. |
| 1.7 | Promote the park offerings through marketing, public relations and outreach programs. |
| 1.8 | Conduct random surveys to measure the quality of visitors' experiences and receive suggestions for improvement. |
| 1.9 | Introduce new initiatives such as the American Wetlands Program and participation in other eco-cultural tourism programs in order to further enhance visitation. |

Indicators

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| Output | Annual visitation.
Number of reservations taken. |
| Efficiency | Operating cost of the park system per visitor. |

Supporting Documentation for Objective #1 Performance Indicators

Rationale/Appropriateness

Visitation is a measurement of the number of people served by the park system. The visitation figure will include those who travel to parks, but will not include participants in off-site park programs offered or off-site outreach activities participated in, such as school-based programs and community events. Off-site participation will be captured through Objective #2. The visitation figures will not include the "opportunity value" or "existence value" of the park to non-users. That is, the value of having the option to use said facilities and the value of preserving significant sites and resources for future generations are not contemplated in the set of indicators related to the number of people served by the park system. The number of operational sites is included as an input indicator as a means of factoring in the effect of having greater accessibility to the agency's sites.

Primary Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the agency's efforts to achieve Objective #1 are the visitors themselves. The agency's efforts are geared toward (1) building awareness of park offerings among potential first-time or infrequent visitors, (2) ensuring customer satisfaction and (3) encouraging repeat visitation. Continuing to grow the visitation of state parks and historic sites is a critical step forward in the economic rebirth of Louisiana through the rebuilding of the tourism industry and the development of cultural economies.

Data Collection Procedure/Source, Frequency and Timing of Data Collection, Calculation Methodology, etc.

Visitation data is collected monthly, totaled annually and is included in a comprehensive report that includes total annual visitation and further breaks down visitation by in-state versus out-of-state visitation, day use versus overnight use, and visitation per site and per month.

The efficiency indicator, operating cost per visitor, is calculated by dividing the final expenditures of the park system by the number of visitors as reported in the latest OSP annual report on visitation and comparing the same information as reported by the other states' park systems in the annual report of the National Association of State Park Directors.

Limitations of the Indicators

As mentioned above, visitation data is fairly conservative in that it only counts the number of people directly, but not indirectly, served by the park system.

Visitation data only reflects the number of people served on-site and excludes participants who come in contact with the park system through off-site events and outreach programs. Also, comparisons to other states are not always indicative of efficiency due to differences in methods of collecting visitation information.

Louisiana counts the actual visitors entering the parks through entrance stations, but many other states do not have entrance stations and use traffic counters and multipliers to determine visitation.

Objective 2. To reach 220,000 through programmatic participation in interpretive programs and events offered annually by the park system by the end of fiscal year 2012-2013.

Strategies

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| 2.1 | Increase staff participation in interpretive training programs, outreach initiatives and research projects. |
| 2.2 | Increase the number and variety of interpretive programs and events offered. |
| 2.3 | Review and evaluate interpretive programming to ensure quality of the programs. |
| 2.4 | Offer new, targeted programs such as the Louisiana Outdoor Outreach Program (LOOP). |

Indicators

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| Output | Number of interpretive programs and events offered annually.
Number of program and event participants. |
| Efficiency | Percentage of programs and event participants to total state park and state historic site visitation. |

Supporting Documentation for Objective #2 Performance Indicators

Rationale/Appropriateness

Programmatic participation incorporates the number of individuals reached and served by OSP staff through programs and activities delivered on-site as well as through outreach programs. Increasing the diversity of interpretive programs extends the reach of OSP beyond the borders of state parks and state historic sites. The result is an extension of the OSP in informing the public of the natural qualities of Louisiana.

This objective builds upon objective #1 by evaluating the ability to extend OSP services beyond the borders of OSP facilities. Through the measurement of programmatic participation, evaluations can be made as to the full extent of the reach of OSP in providing educational and informational services to Louisiana's residents and guests.

Additionally, through programs such as LOOP, OSP is making an effort to reach out to provide services to a base population not previously served. This program offers experiential education directly geared toward at risk youth and is particularly well suited to interpret the unique assets of Louisiana.

Primary Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the agency's efforts to achieve Objective #2 are the program participants and educators, preservationists, academicians, local children (schools) and communities. The ultimate benefit through this objective is in building better lives than before for all of Louisiana's residents.

Data Collection Procedure/Source, Frequency and Timing of Data Collection, Calculation Methodology, etc.

The number of participants reached each year is determined by a number of factors. Each site within the park system submits to the central office an annual list of programs it would like to offer during the next fiscal year. The interpretive staff evaluates the pool of requests on the basis of a number of factors including staff availability, scheduling, budget constraints and the proposed program's historical and scientific validity. The approved list of programs is set at the beginning of the year. Any changes (cancellations or additions) will be included in the final program count.

Participation in the programs is measured at the site of the event and is reported to the central office. The park staff and public information section promote events through press releases and other media where possible.

Outreach activities extend participation through delivery of programs at schools and events outside of the boundaries of parks and historic sites. Interpretive personnel account for attendance of outreach activities and report those numbers to the central office.

Development of the LOOP program further extends the reach of state park interpretive programming. Through partnerships with educational organizations, LOOP offers outdoor education to inner-city youth. This provides experiential learning of the outdoors. Numbers of participants in the LOOP program are reported back to the central office.

The efficiency indicator will be obtained by dividing the total number of participants of interpretive programs offered by the total visitation of all state parks and state historic sites.

Limitations of the Indicators

Reporting of participation is a fair indicator of the ability of programmatic participation, but it only accounts for a portion of the interpretive services section of OSP. Some programs offered are extremely labor-intensive and costly, while others are more modest, such as guided nature walks. Further, some programs may appear modest but require extensive research and preparation.

Objective 3.To complete 40 new or expanded facilities in accordance with the State Parks Master Plan by the end of fiscal year 2012-2013.

Strategies

- 3.1 Pursue the development and completion of facilities contained in the Office of State Parks 15-Year Master Plan.
- 3.2 Develop and implement a system to inventory the resources at all sites through the capital outlay program.
- 3.3 Analyze the relationships between resources.
- 3.4 As appropriate, collaborate with experts from area universities, public agencies and/or professional experts.
- 3.5 Delineate the functionality of each site’s resources and recreational or interpretive potential.
- 3.6 Constantly review trends and demands in resource management and park development to ensure all sites’ plans are current.

Indicators

- Output Number of Capital Outlay projects completed.
Number of facilities repaired, renovated or replaced.
- Outcome Number of new or expanded sites completed.

Supporting Documentation for Objective #3 Performance Indicators

Rationale/Appropriateness

The State Parks Master Plan is a comprehensive planning document prepared for the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of State Parks. The purpose of this plan is to guide the acquisition, development and management of Louisiana's State Parks System. This State Parks Master Plan is a product of a comprehensive, team-oriented study and assessment. This approach combines statistical analyses, examinations of national recreation planning trends, professional expertise, user input and the Office of State Parks staff judgments. The outcome is a recommended plan of action to improve the Louisiana State Parks System over the remaining years of the plan.

An individual “master plan” is a document that provides a blueprint for the location of current and future facilities, taking into consideration the location of ecological and cultural resources. A “current” master plan is one that is reflective of present-day resources and recreational or interpretive needs.

Progress should be measured on a site-by-site basis. While there are indicators relating to the number of acres and operational sites in the park system, these are merely input indicators that give some idea about the extent of the work involved.

Achievement of this objective is measured through the completion of new or expanded “operational units.” For this objective, an operational unit is defined as a new or expanded facility within a state park or state historic site developed or

enhanced and turned over from the resource management section to the operations section for use. An operational unit would include such diverse projects as a visitors center, entrance station, boat ramp, pedestrian bridge, trail, restroom facility, splash park, swim pool, playground, RV sites, cabins, group camp, etc. In the event of new or expanded RV sites or cabins, new or expanded groups are counted as one regardless of the number of RV sites or cabins.

Primary Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the agency's efforts to achieve Objective #3 are today's visitors who may enjoy the sites in top condition, and future generations of visitors who may enjoy the same. Ongoing development of new and expanded facilities strives to achieve OSP's goal of building facilities of worldwide preeminence to help grow Louisiana as a top tourist destination.

Data Collection Procedure/Source, Frequency and Timing of Data Collection, Calculation Methodology, etc.

Much of the data collection and development of the master plans will be done in conjunction with other public agencies, universities and professionals as warranted, and in conjunction with the plans and specifications for construction.

Semi-annually, the agency will evaluate the rate of progress. Deadlines will be set to ensure that the five-year objective is met, as well as the objectives contained in the annual operating plan.

Within the scope of this objective, a new or expanded facility is defined as an operational unit within our state parks or historic sites.

Limitations of the Indicators

This indicator is limited by its dependence on the capital outlay budget, but once a facility is in the system, complete or partial funding will be approved according to the priority and sale of bonds.

Objective 4. To obligate 90% of federal funds allocated to Louisiana through the Land and Water Conservation Fund program through grant applications for the development of outdoor recreational facilities by the end of fiscal year 2012- 2013.

Strategies

- 4.1 Process billing and conduct compliance inspections for LWCF construction projects so that all projects have been inspected in accordance with federal standards (at least once every five years).
- 4.2 Review state and federal permits for impact on park and recreation projects as required by LWCF standards.
- 4.3 Ensure all new project applicants are fully aware of compliance requirements at outset.
- 4.4 Ensure all new recreation projects meet at least one of the top needs identified in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Indicators

Input	Percentage of available federal L&WCF funds obligated.
Outcome	Number of L&WCF projects funded annually.

Supporting Documentation for the Objective #4 Performance Indicators

Rationale/Appropriateness

As per RS 56:1803, the Assistant Secretary of the Office of State Parks is designated as the authorized representative of the State of Louisiana under the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund Act, and the Office of State Parks is charged with the duties of administering and monitoring recreation projects funded through the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

Through the federal budget, Louisiana receives an annual allocation of monies for distribution to political subdivisions for the development of outdoor recreation facilities. These monies are distributed in accordance with provisions of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. Annual allocations have totaled more than \$65 million since the L&WCF Act was signed into law and have varied in recent years from no money to more than \$2 million annually. The Division of Outdoor Recreation in OSP is responsible for evaluation of L&WCF applications and obtaining federal approval to fully utilize available federal monies to support development of outdoor recreation facilities.

It is the objective of the agency to capture and utilize federal funding to meet the outdoor recreation needs of Louisiana as identified in the latest edition of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.

Achieving the goal of obligation of 90% of the annual federal funding allows for 10% to support construction cost overruns. This cushion protects project sponsors from escalating construction costs such as those that have been prevalent in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It allows project sponsors to fully realize the recreational aspects of their development plans without incurring extra out-of-pocket costs.

Primary Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the agency's efforts to achieve Objective #4 are recreation enthusiasts who take advantage of the recreational offerings made available through the LWCF program in the past and those that will become available in the future. Not only does this provide for building better lives for Louisiana residents, it assures the Division of Outdoor Recreation is a model of high performance.

Data Collection Procedure/Source, Frequency and Timing of Data Collection, Calculation Methodology, etc.

The agency receives an annual allocation of federal funding to support the state side L&WCF program. The agency also receives project applications in accordance with an annual deadline of April 1. Through identification of projects that meet the top recreational needs of the state and that are in keeping with the standards of the L&WCF Act, the Division of Outdoor Recreation compiles necessary documentation and acquires federal approval of projects to obligate available federal funding.

Limitations on the Indicators

The availability of federal funding to support the L&WCF program is the primary limiting factor of this program. This factor is outside the control of OSP and rests solely with the federal government. Additionally, the number of viable applications received is outside the control of OSP. The Division of Outdoor Recreation must strive to promote the availability of funding for the program in order to receive the maximum number of viable applications to fully utilize federal funds to the maximum extent possible.

Office of State Parks Program Supporting Documentation

A. Description of how the strategic planning process was implemented

The Office of Parks is guided by the State Parks Master Plan. This strategic instrument is a comprehensive planning document prepared for the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism, Office of State Parks. The purpose of this plan is to guide the acquisition, development and management of Louisiana's State Parks System. The plan is a product of a comprehensive, team-oriented study and assessment. This approach combines statistical analyses, examinations of national recreation planning trends, professional expertise, user input and the Office of State Parks staff judgments. The outcome is a recommended plan of action to improve the Louisiana State Park System.

B. Statement identifying the principal clients and users of each program and the specific service or benefit derived by such persons

The Office of State Parks is established to serve all Louisiana residents and their visitors. Included in this broad classification are tourists, school groups, educational institutions, academicians, historians, preservationists, recreation enthusiasts (cyclists, anglers, canoeists, hikers, campers, birders, runners, etc.), educators, scouting, Friends, 4H and other service organizations, state, federal and local agencies and professional and recreational organizations. Through its preservation role, the agency serves the interests of the above-mentioned groups, plus future generations of Louisiana citizens and visitors including those who do not avail themselves of park services. The benefit derived by these groups is the opportunity to take advantage of state's recreational resources and to learn about its natural, cultural and historical resources. Other beneficiaries of the agency's program are related businesses (e.g. canoe outfitters, bait shops, sutlers, tour operators, etc.) and support businesses and attractions (museums, hotels, shops, restaurants, gas stations, etc.). Their benefits are economic.

C. Identification of the primary persons who will benefit from or be significantly affected by each objective within the plan

The primary beneficiaries of the objectives of this plan are all Louisiana taxpayers. Increased visitation provides for a positive return on investment through economic impact in proximity to state park facilities. An increase in the numbers of persons reached by programmatic material benefits participants through increased educational opportunity. Ongoing development of new and expanded facilities raises the quality level for state park facilities to the benefit of our stakeholders, Louisiana taxpayers. And maximizing the use of federal funds also benefits Louisiana taxpayers through development of facilities to meet their outdoor recreation needs.

D. Statutory requirement or authority for each goal

The Office of State Parks has one goal authorized under both La. RS 36:201 et seq. and La. RS 56:1681 et seq.

E. Potential external factors

The successful accomplishment of the agency's goals and objectives is heavily dependent upon a number of external variables. For example, visitation and quality of the park experience are affected by the weather, insects, lake draw downs, hurricanes, floods, winter storms, tornadoes, power outages, droughts, pine beetle infestations and the aftermath associated therewith. Mechanical breakdowns, construction projects and major repairs impact and often temporarily disrupt access and /or services to the public. Further, the economy, highway signage (and lack thereof), funding levels and changing demographics and recreation trends will have an impact on the achievement of the program's goals.

F. Description of any program evaluations used to develop objectives and strategies

In establishing its objectives and strategies, the agency referred to the Louisiana Rebirth Plan, the Roadmap for Change, Louisiana State Parks Master Plan, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the 1998 Stakeholder Analysis, the Governor's Four- and Eight- Year Plans, the Master Plan for Marketing State Parks, the current interpretive program list and the agency's annual visitation reports.

The Louisiana Rebirth Plan identifies priorities for the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism to expedite Louisiana's return to worldwide preeminence as a top tourist and cultural destination. The Roadmap for Change establishes philosophies for the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism to lead Louisiana forward by leveraging and investing in the appropriate collaborations and partnerships to make Louisiana an exceptional place to live, work and play.

The Louisiana State Parks Master Plan is the guiding document for the acquisition, planning and construction of new and existing sites and facilities. In addition to the recommendations contained in the fifteen-year master plan, the agency regularly receives requests to conduct feasibility studies for the acquisition and development of other sites. The Division of Resource Planning and Development is responsible for these projects, repair and expansion projects and technical assistance provided to other state and local entities as requested. The number of capital outlay projects, feasibility studies, technical assistance projects and repair work undertaken depends on the needs and requests in a given year. Those activities are not contemplated under this strategic plan.

G. Explanation of how duplication will be avoided

The Office of State Parks has only one program, and one program goal. The program objectives complement each other in the achievement of the program goal.